

Governor Markell Announces Expansion of World Language Immersion Initiative

Would build on four years of successful language immersion education

Wilmington, DE – When the LaMotte family traveled to China to adopt their new child, Abigail had a dual role: big sister and family translator.

Abigail is one of 100 third-graders in the Caesar Rodney School District who were part of the first kindergarten classes to enter the Chinese immersion program in 2012. That same year 240 students began Spanish immersion in the Indian River and Red Clay Consolidated school districts. Starting in kindergarten, immersion students spend half of each school day learning in Mandarin Chinese or Spanish. This year, 2,125 students in grades K-3 are learning in Chinese and Spanish immersion classrooms in 16 schools across the state. By the fall, that number will increase to almost 3,000 students in grades K-4 in 22 schools.

Governor Jack Markell, who provided the leadership and funding for [immersion studies](#) through his [World Language Expansion Initiative](#) in 2011, on Tuesday joined immersion students from across the Caesar Rodney School District for a celebratory event at Simpson Elementary School, where he also discussed the state's plan to expand the program and to ensure students can continue their immersion language study after elementary school.

The expansion aims to establish 20 immersion programs across the state by 2016, reaching nearly 8,000 students in ten years.

[A fact sheet reviewing the program's first four years and looking forward to the future can be found here.](#)

"These children already are speaking, writing and learning in their immersion language each day. They have worked hard and made great progress in their language proficiency. We owe it to them to provide them the opportunity to continue their immersion studies by integrating content and language into their secondary school studies," Markell said. "With our commitment, these children will graduate from our public schools with the language skills to compete in an ever-changing global economy at home and around the world."

In March 2015, a 12-member Middle School Immersion Advisory Committee began studying how to expand the program. The committee's [final report](#) includes recommendations such as offering students a minimum of two courses and 90-minutes of continuous daily instruction in the immersion language with courses such as social studies and science taught in the immersion language.

The first continuation program will be piloted in Red Clay during the 2017-18 academic year with about 60 Spanish immersion students. Statewide rollout in both Chinese and Spanish will occur in 2018-19 with about 225 students, who will enter sixth grade in Caesar Rodney, Indian River and Red Clay districts. When the students reach high school, they will take Advanced Placement Spanish or Chinese in grade 9 then continue to increase their language proficiency through dual enrollment options in grades 10 to 12.

"Those who complete the entire K-12 immersion experience will graduate with significant credits toward an undergraduate college minor in Chinese or Spanish and will have acquired advanced-level language proficiency, setting them up for success in the global marketplace," Secretary of Education Steve Godowsky said.

Caesar Rodney Superintendent Kevin Fitzgerald has championed the immersion program in his district since its inception. He said the program has been embraced by students, families, educators, school board members and the greater CR community.

“Our children are excited to learn. They are improving in their fluency while also continuing to progress in their other academic subjects,” he said. “The language proficiency they are gaining will continue to benefit them throughout their lives.”

CHINESE IMMERSION PROGRAMS FOR 2016-17

Caesar Rodney School District

- J. Ralph McIlvaine Early Childhood Center (K)
- Allen J. Frear Elementary School (1-4)
- WB Simpson Elementary School (1-4)

Christina School District

- John R. Downes Elementary School (K-3)

Colonial School District

- New Castle Elementary School (K-1)

SPANISH IMMERSION PROGRAMS FOR 2016-17

Appoquinimink School District

- Townsend Early Childhood Center (K)
- **Silver Lake Elementary School (1)**
- **Townsend Elementary School (1)**

Brandywine School District

- Claymont Elementary School (K-1)

Caesar Rodney School District

- J. Ralph McIlvaine Early Childhood Center (K)
- W. Reily Brown Elementary School (1-2)

Capital School District

- South Dover Elementary School (K-3)

- **Fairview Elementary School (K)**

Indian River School District

- John M. Clayton Elementary School (K-4)
- East Millsboro Elementary (K-3)

Milford School District

- **Morris Early Childhood Center (K)**

Red Clay Consolidated School District

- Lewis Dual Language Elementary School (K-5)

Seaford School District

- Blades Elementary School (K-2)
- West Seaford Elementary School (K-2)
- **Central Elementary School (3)**
- **Frederick Douglass Elementary School (3)**

Smyrna School District

- **North Smyrna Elementary School (K)**

*Schools in bold are new for 2016-17